The impact of technology on women’s experience of gender-based violence

A critical discourse analysis of the #16DaysofActivism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign

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# Table of Contents

Abstract  
1. Introduction  
2. Literature review  
   2.1 TFGBV - definitions, prevalence and forms  
   2.2 Breaking down dualisms and identifying key concepts  
3. Theoretical framework  
   3.1 The Public Sphere  
   3.2 Development Theory  
4. Case Study: #16daysofactivism  
5. Methodology  
   5.1 Data collection  
   5.2 Limitations  
   5.3 Ethical considerations and positionality  
6. Structure of Analysis and Findings  
   6.1 Demographics  
   6.2 Fairclough’s dimension 1: The text itself  
   6.2.1 Summary of findings - SRQ1  
   6.3 Fairclough Dimension 2: Discursive practice  
   6.3.1 Summary of findings - RQ2  
7. Conclusion  
   7.1 Fairclough’s Dimension 3: Social practice  
   7.2 Way forward  
Bibliography  
Annex I: Risk assessment for social media data  
Annex II: Geographical representation data  
Annex III: Data on mentions
Abstract

This paper focuses on the topic of technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) – forms of violence and abuse perpetrated against individuals on the basis of gender in online spaces or through technological means.

It is a recent and highly pervasive issue that the activist, academic and development worlds are working to define. Those working on the fight against gender-based violence (GBV) have begun to re-frame the issue of harassment and abuse experienced online or through technology as a form of violence by placing it on a continuum of violence. By furthermore noting its gendered nature, they have situated it as a form of gender-based violence. While a variety of terminology has been employed to describe how such violence is committed, who is targeted and how they experience it the field of GBV is still working towards a discursive consensus.

This paper takes the stance that the language we use to define and frame social issues is of critical importance because it can influence wider social change. Accordingly, critical discourse analysis will be employed to consider to what extent the discourse of technology figures into the wider discourse on gender-based violence. So as to narrow the focus of the analysis, this paper will look at the discourse around GBV produced by actors in the international development field, considering that social norms change is a primary focus within programming and activities around gender equality and the prevention of gender-based violence. For this, the analysis will consider the 2021 iteration of the annual 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence movement and campaign, looking at social media content posted during the core campaign period (25 November - 10 December 2021).
1. Introduction

Gender-based violence is a pressing global issue; according to UN Women, 736 million women (nearly 1 in 3 women) and approximately 30% of women aged 15 and older have experienced “physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence, non-partner sexual violence, or both at least once in their life” (UN Women, n.d.a). Since the start of the global COVID-19 pandemic there have been growing concerns about an exponential increase in reported cases of GBV, resulting in a “shadow pandemic” of violence against women (UN Women, 2020, pg. 3). Among concerns about the types of violence being reported, a particular focus was placed on violence committed via technology (UN Women, 2020, pg. 1) resulting from an estimated 50-70% increase in internet usage as governments around the globe instituted lockdown and quarantine measures, and people shifted their lives into digital spaces (UN Women, 2020, pg. 2). UN Women estimates that by April 2020, nearly half of the world’s population was living under lockdown measures (UN Women, 2020, pg. 2) and that during this time “ICT-facilitated violence [...] spread under the shadow pandemic of violence against women” (UN Women, n.d.b, pg. 3).

Global survey results published by the Economist’s Intelligence Unit (EIU) in 2021 looking at women’s lived experience of “online violence against women” appear to support the estimates made in the UN Women report. The results of this survey are staggering; EIU found that the overall prevalence of “online violence against women” worldwide is 85%, with 38% of women surveyed reporting having personally experienced online violence, and 65% reporting having known someone in their personal and/or professional networks who has been a victim (2021). It is widely understood that despite technology’s potential as a great equalizing force, the internet and online spaces are rife with harassment and abuse. Though digital technology, the internet, and social media are powerful tools for amplifying individuals’ voices and participation in the public sphere, those same tools can just as easily
be used to harass and silence them. This is particularly true for women\(^1\) and individuals from marginalized groups (LGBTQ+, people of color, indigenous populations, etc.), and even more so for young women and girls, those in the public spotlight, and/or those located in the Global South (WWWF, 2021a).

Working to prevent violence against women in all its forms is a priority in international development programming. In this context the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) highlights the importance of a shared terminology and definition for the phenomenon of violence committed through technology to establish coordinated development approaches, including minimum standards for measurement, response and prevention (UNFPA, 2021a, pg. 9). A review of available literature, to be explored further in the following chapter, also demonstrates a lack of research on how this issue is being communicated whether by organizations, governments, activists and/or individuals involved in the fight against gender-based violence (GBV). At the same time, understanding how we define and communicate this issue is critical; writes researcher Suzie Dunn, “The words used to describe a phenomenon shape the legal and social understanding of that experience. A change in terminology around a particular behavior can in turn change the norms of that society” (2021, pg. 26). Therefore, the discourse, or how we define and talk about this issue of “abusive technology-facilitated behaviors” (Dunn, 2021, pg. 27) is crucial in shaping social understanding and norms, as well as development and legal responses.

For the purposes of this paper, I employ the terminology “technology-facilitated gender-based violence” (TFBGV) to refer to such abusive behaviors, which UNFPA defines as,

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\text{An act of violence perpetrated by one or more individuals that is committed, assisted, aggravated and amplified in part or fully by the use of information and}\]

\(^1\) The categorization of “woman” today refers to a spectrum and may include individuals from a different sex who identify as a woman. Though it is not clear that all sources referenced in this paper make this distinction, when used in this paper this term is meant to be inclusive of all individuals who identify as a woman.
communication technologies or digital media against a person on the basis of their gender. (UNFPA, 2021a, pg. 9)

In more simple terms, it is “any form of gender-based violence that involves the use of digital technologies” (Dunn, 2020, p. 11). Though there are many similar, but varying terms employed to describe this issue, this paper aligns with these definitions considering TFBGV to be the most comprehensive, inclusive, and nuanced term highlighting, “the gendered nature of the violence and [...] the circumstances and forms in which technology can be used to perpetrate violence” (UNFPA, 2021a, pg. 9). Accordingly, I understand the term “technology” to mean the information and communication technologies we use in our daily lives for professional and personal communications (e.g. the internet, mobile devices, email, social media, etc.), but also recognizing that such technologies are not neutral and are shaped by the social norms within which they exist. Lastly, this paper shares an understanding of the importance of discourse and accordingly will seek to analyze the issue from a communications and social change perspective via critical discourse analysis.

To this end, I will analyze discourse embedded in the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign, looking specifically at discourse on the impact that technology has on women’s experiences of violence. The 16 Days Campaign is a relevant point of departure as it is a long-standing advocacy campaign and organizing strategy that engages activists and organizations across the international development and non-profit sectors in the fight against gender-based violence. With its focus on influencing social change, as well as its position at the intersection of human rights activism and its role as a convener between local and international GBV advocacy efforts, this campaign is uniquely situated as a relevant site of production of discourse within the development sector. In examining the campaign, I seek to answer the following research question - How is the impact of technology on women’s experience of violence recognized in wider development discourses around gender-based violence within the 16 Days Campaign? - through an exploration of the following sub-questions:
• Is there a shared understanding, terminology and definition of the issue of TFGBV, as well as its various forms, impacts and responses to it?

• How do we define the context within which TFGBV discourse is situated, including the genres and themes that guide it, as well as the voices present or missing from the discussion and their linkages?

This analysis will be informed by a review of recent literature defining the current concepts that can be used to situate TFGBV as a form of gendered violence. It will also be informed by the theoretical framework, which employs both development theory and public sphere theory to frame TFGBV as a violation of women's basic human rights to free participation in the public sphere and how this phenomenon, which reflects deep-rooted social norms (Dunn, 2020, pg. 2), limits women’s participation in society. This study is therefore well situated in the field of Communications for Development as it seeks to address not only a growing issue of social justice, but also to emphasize the power of communication as a tool in guiding development work and supporting social change.

2. Literature review

Across the literature a wide array of terms have been used to describe this phenomenon; some have referred to “online harassment” (Vogel, 2021), “online ICT-facilitated violence” (UN Women, 2020), “technology-facilitated sexual violence” (Henry & Powell, 2018), online violence against women” (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2021), “technology-facilitated violence against women and girls” (Marganski & Malander, 2021), etc. However, as mentioned in the introduction, this paper will employ the term “technology-facilitated gender-based violence” (TFBGV) (see Dunn, 2020; UNFPA, 2021a), as the most inclusive terminology. Taking as a starting point this paper’s emphasis on the importance of discourse, it is important to understand the basis on which we currently define “abusive technology-facilitated behaviors” (Dunn, 2021, pg. 27) as a form of violence. This understanding is derived in part from the UN Declaration on the
Elimination of Violence Against Women, which provides a general definition of “gender-based violence” as any act "that results in or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life” (OHCHR, 1993). However, it is also a result of the application of existing theories of violence to the specific issue of TFGBV. Accordingly, this chapter will review recent literature drawing on key concepts - specifically the mind/body and online/offline dualisms, which include discussions on the continuum of violence, embodied harms, and the coercive effects of violence - existing concepts that have more recently been applied to the framing of technology-facilitated abuse and harassment in order to situate them as a form of gender-based violence. This literature review will focus mainly on articles published within the last 5-7 years in order to account for the fast pace of technological advancements and the very recent emphasis placed on this issue in the academic and development sectors. While this may limit the scope of the literature review somewhat, I have done this purposefully to ensure that the research is based on the most relevant and up-to-date data, terminology, and theoretical concepts. As a result, this chapter relies more heavily on the work of researchers Suzie Dunn, and Nicola Henry and Anastasia Powell, who have published some of the most comprehensive literature in recent years that attempts to put forward a common terminology, define the various forms, and connect the issue to existing concepts of gender-based violence. Throughout this chapter, I will also refer to literature produced by UN Women and UNFPA who have been working in this space and publishing reliable and useful insights from the development perspective. In addition, I will refer to data from the Economist’s Intelligence Unit global survey measuring the prevalence of online violence against women to help ground the discussion in women’s lived realities. Throughout this discussion I will aim to highlight potential gaps and opportunities in current research.
2.1 TFGBV - definitions, prevalence and forms

While in the Introduction we have seen the high prevalence of TFGBV globally, broken down regionally the highest rates of such violence are found in the Middle East (98%), Latin America and the Caribbean (91%), and Africa (90%), with lower (though still relatively high) rates of 88%, 76% and 74% reported in Asia Pacific, North America and Europe, respectively (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2021). This is revealing, as current literature focuses mainly on the experience of women in the Global North (see Dunn, 2020; Bailey et. al., 2021; Makinde et. al., 2021), while at the same time data shows that it is actually regions in the Global South experiencing the highest prevalence of online violence against women. This points to a glaring gap in research on this topic in terms of understanding the experiences of women in the Global South who are impacted at higher rates. During my review, one article was identified that examined the experience of both men and women online in Sub-Saharan Africa (see Makinde et. al., 2021), but in general a major gap remains.

The same Economist Intelligence Unit survey data shows that the main forms of TFGBV experienced by women (in order of prevalence) are:

- “Misinformation and defamation” (67%), the spreading of false information about a woman to damage her character;
- “Cyber-harassment” (66%), defined as “repeated behavior using textual or graphic content to frighten or undermine self-esteem”;
- “Hate speech” (65%), harmful speech intended to hurt or humiliate;
- “Impersonation” (63%), differs from misinformation and defamation, in that it refers to the creation of a false online persona in another person’s name;

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2 The EIU survey looked at the top 51 countries in terms of number of persons online (2021).
3 The Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) based in Canada is currently carrying out a major global research initiative looking at women and LGBTQ+ individuals’ experiences of online violence, however at the time of writing this thesis data was not yet available. See https://www.cigionline.org/activities/supporting-safer-internet/.
● “**Hacking and stalking**” (63%), gaining access to another person’s communication and data without their consent, and targeting women online through the use of location tracking tools;
● “**Astroturfing**” (58%), defined as “a coordinated effort to concurrently share damaging content across platforms” (also referred to as “**networked harassment**” [Dunn, 2020, pg. 14]);
● “**Video and image-based abuse**” (57%), involves the sharing of a person’s images or videos online or through digital means without their consent;
● “**Doxing/doxxing**” (55%), the public sharing of a person’s personal contact information (for example, home address) for the purposes of perpetrating violence;
● “**Violent threats**” (52%), defined as “threats of physical harm through online channels” (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2021).

Works published by Dunn and UNFPA generally agree with the naming and definition of the above-listed forms that have been put forward by the Economist, but also note some additional forms including:

● “**Technology-facilitated sexual abuse,**” involves the use of technology to “commit or procure sexual assault or abuse” (UNFPA, 2021a, pg. 14) (may also include “sextortion” and “sexploitation” [Dunn, 2020, pg. 11]);
● “**Limiting or controlling the use of technology,**” which may often occur in intimate partner relationships and may involve exerting coercive control of another person’s use of technology (UNFPA, 2021, pg. 17);
● “**Voyeurism/creepshots,**” defined as “a person surreptitiously taking photos or recording a video of another person for a sexual purpose” (Dunn, 2020, pg 10);
● “**Documenting or broadcasting sexual assault,**” that is the livestreaming of sexual assault on social media platforms” (Dunn, 2020, pg. 12);
● “**Synthetic media,**” in which a woman’s likeness is photoshopped or digitally altered in such a way that she falsely appears in sexual imagery,” (Dunn, 2020, pg. 12).
One commonality among the above-listed forms is they represent forms of psychological or emotional violence and do not require physical contact between the victim and perpetrator. In some cases the perpetrator may even be anonymous and unknown to the victim (UNFPA, 2021a, pg. 27). According to Dunn, this lack of physical contact is “one of the greatest challenges in conceptualizing harmful technology-facilitated behaviors as violence” (Dunn, 2021, pg. 29) due to what Henry and Powell have referred to as “problematic mind/body and offline/online dualisms” (2015, pg. 1). It is, therefore, necessary to look at such abusive acts within larger patterns of violence, considering the interconnections between physical, psychological and emotional abuse and taking into account the way in which our offline and online realities have become increasingly and inextricably entwined.

2.2 Breaking down dualisms and identifying key concepts

In considering the dualism of body and mind, this refers to an understanding of the physical body as a tangible entity that is perceived to be more real than the intangible mind. As such, acts of psychological or emotional abuse may be viewed as less serious than acts of physical violence. However, according to Dunn scholar Liz Kelly’s foundational research served to counter this understanding already back in the 1980s, the results of which led her to define the concept a “continuum of sexual violence” (2021, pg. 29). In this research Kelly interviewed a group of female survivors of sexual violence in which their experiences showed evidence that physical and psychological acts of violence could not be viewed as independent from each other (Dunn, 2021, pg. 29). She concluded that “a hierarchy that places physical attacks at the top as most serious, and emotional abuse at the bottom as least serious did not reflect women’s lived experiences of sexual violence” (Dunn, 2021, pg. 29). Kelly found that in such a hierarchy, the negative effects of non-physical violence are overlooked, while the reality of her interviewees showed that violence occurs across a spectrum of harmful behaviors, including psychological and emotional harms that negatively affect women as much, if not more, than physical harms.
(Dunn, 2021, pg. 29). What Kelly refers to here is reflected nearly 30 years later in the concept of “embodied harms” put forward by Australian researchers Nicola Henry and Anastasia Powell (2015). In their work, Henry and Powell question whether violence must be “enacted on the body of the subject” for it to be considered “harm” (2015, pg. 765). In their view the effects of technology-facilitated violence cannot be discounted, as the psychological and emotional impacts experienced by survivors are “embodied” (2015, pg. 770). Accordingly, they argue that such forms of violence should be considered as a “collective phenomenon” occurring “within a spectrum of violence” that includes “physical, emotional, symbolic, and structural” (2015, pg. 759) forms of violence. Coupled with the previous data showing the disproportionate rates at which women experience online violence, these concepts of the “continuum of violence” and “embodied harms” are critical to situating our understanding of abusive technology-facilitated acts as a form of gender-based violence. They serve to break down the false separation of mind and body, supporting the stance that emotional and psychological abuse experienced by women via technology falls well within the definition of violence, and that the harms experienced in such instances can substantially impact women’s physical lives (2015, pg. 765) in equally negative ways. This is echoed by both Elizabeth Coombs - who argued that violence is not just “interpersonal incidents between individuals” and that the “social, political and economic consequences of violence cannot be ignored” (2021, pg. 476) - and Ruth Lewis, et. al. - who argued that online violence is not simply an individualized issue of communication, nor are its psychological or physical effects limited to the online realm (2017).

Having considered the first dualism we move to the next, referring to Chandall Gosse who cites the work of media theorist Nathan Jurgenson (2011) and his concept of “digital dualism” (Gosse, 2021, pg. 48). In Gosse’s description of Jurgenson’s work, this is defined as a “bias that treats offline/physical life as real and online/digital life as virtual and somehow less real” (2021, pg. 48). Accordingly, this notion favors offline interactions, and serves to reproduce and reinforce the idea of the existence of opposing online and offline
realities (2021, pg. 49). However, as technology has developed and become so ingrained in our day-to-day lives, it becomes more and more difficult to disentangle our basic communications and interactions from technology. As such, this distinction becomes irrelevant; what happens online affects our physical life, and vice versa. Gosse refers again to Jurgenson [2011b], who goes so far as to call digital dualism a “fallacy” (2021, pg. 48). We need only think of victims of image-based abuse, for example, whose private images have been shared online without their consent and who suffer severe real-life impacts (see McGlynn, et. al, 2021) to understand that such a barrier no longer exists. Indeed, abuse is committed not only on a continuum of violence, but also on a continuum between online and offline realities, so much so that it becomes “difficult to distinguish the consequences of actions that are initiated in digital environments from offline realities, and vice versa” (UN Women 2020, pg 3). Breaking down this false division of online vs offline worlds furthermore speaks to EIU’s analysis that “online violence against women should be seen on the same continuum as offline violence,” (2021) as well as the idea that individuals’ experiences of violence in online spaces or via technological means reflect and reinforce deep-rooted social norms and inequalities arising from existing power relationships that persist to this day (O’Donnell & Sweetman, 2018; Tufekci, 2017; Dunn, 2020; Coombs, 2021). Just as women are most widely impacted by violence in the physical realm, so are they disproportionately affected by violence within the digital realm, the effects of which are real and embodied.

This points to the common thread through the above discussions - the concrete impacts such violence has on the lived experiences of women. Though there is much research to be done in understanding women’s lived experiences of TFGBV, according to Coombs, TFGBV can impact (among many factors) physical and mental health, leading in some cases to suicide, as well as restrictions (self-imposed or otherwise) on movements, association, and participation in social, political and cultural life (2021, pg. 480), including in online spaces. To this point, the EIU reports that 92% of women surveyed reported harm to their sense of well-being as a result of online violence (2021). Accordingly, nearly 9 in
10 women self-restricted their online activity (2021). This data reflects in part the coercive nature of TFGBV (Dunn, 2021, pg. 31), seen in the phenomenon of women altering their behavior and limiting their participation online either in response to or in avoidance of TFGBV. Being forced to self-impose such limitations on their own access to technology removes a critical means for women to communicate and hinders their access to potential economic opportunities, deepening the global digital divide between men and women (see Plan International, n.d.a). This ultimately impacts a woman’s right to freedom of expression, participation, assembly and association as enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (OHCHR, 1979). In this way, defining TFGBV as a form of gender-based violence, allows us to furthermore understand such acts as a violation of women’s basic human rights, impeding their individual agency and full and equal participation in the public sphere. In the following chapter, we will explore the theoretical framing of TFGBV further through the concepts of the public sphere and trace the development of these concepts through the lens of development theory.

3. Theoretical framework

3.1 The Public Sphere

In discussing technology-facilitated violence and embodied harms, Henry and Powell describe the internet as a “frontier of new democracy, a normative public sphere in the Habermasian sense” (2015, pg 761). In doing so they link to public sphere theory as put forward by Jurgen Habermas who defines the public sphere as an open space for rational deliberation by private individuals, a space that is separated from the state and economy in which everyone can participate and have an equal voice in contributing to a discursive consensus on matters of the common good (Fraser, 1990, pg. 3-4). The purpose of the public sphere is to hold the state accountable to the needs of society (Tufekci, 2017, pg.
37. But Habermas’ original conception has been criticized as a utopian view that does not account for the unequal power relations that exist in society. On this point, Nancy Fraser cites scholars Joan Landes and Geoffrey Eley who counter that the public sphere has never been an open and equal space, rather it has always been based on levels of exclusion, in particular on the basis of gender and class (Fraser, 1990, pg. 6). These exclusions have since become rooted into the fabric of social norms. According to Fraser, “It is a measure of the eventual success of this bourgeois project that these norms later became hegemonic, sometimes imposed on, sometimes embraced by, broader segments of society” (1990, pg. 6).

Taking this concept forward into our current context, Zeynep Tufekci raises an important point that “the dynamics of public spheres are intertwined with power relations, social structures, institutions, and technologies that change over time” (2017, pg. 38). Accordingly, researchers have been grappling with how the internet, social media and other digital tools influence the public sphere and the overall project of democracy. This has been conceptualized as the digital public sphere, which in the view of Habermasian theory is envisioned as,

.. a communicative sphere provided or supported by online or social media – from websites to social network sites, weblogs and micro-blogs – where participation is open and freely available to everybody who is interested, where matters of common concern can be discussed, and where proceedings are visible to all. (Schäfer, 2015, pg. 3)

In this view, the transition to online media may be referred to as “the second structural transformation of the public sphere” (Schäfer, 2015, pg. 4), in which the internet, social media, etc., are a safeguard for critical freedoms such as the right to free speech, assembly and association (Henry & Powell, 2015, pg. 761). However, just as the original conception of the public sphere faced criticism, so do Henry and Powell point out that such

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4 Though they do not explicitly mention other intersectional factors of exclusion and the focus of this paper remains on women and the overall issue of gender, certainly race or indigenous status, sexual orientation, and/or rural location (among others) must also be considered as exclusionary factors as we recognize them today.
assumptions about technology and the internet obscure the reality of unequal gender relations that persist online just as they persist offline (2015, pg. 761). Indeed, the digital public sphere is based on social exclusion just as much as its original conception. We now recognize the internet as “a site of social and cultural production that reflects real-world patterns" (Lewis et al., 2017, pg. 1464), where offline power relations and imbalances are reflected in our online and technological interactions, and where neutrality is lost (Tufekci 2017, pg. 178). We, therefore, understand that technology and the internet do not safeguard individuals’ rights of freedom of assembly, speech and association, in particular for women. We also understand that gender and identity-based inequalities determine who enjoys access to ICTs (O’Donnell et al., 2018, pg. 217) and ultimately benefits from participation in the digital public sphere. Tying this idea directly to TFGBV, O’Donnell and Sweetman highlight that “online is an environment where the social norms that justify and perpetuate GBV, normalizing it as an everyday aspect of gender relations, are alive and flourishing” (O’Donnell, Sweetman, 2018, pg. 223).

In recognizing these inequalities within the digital public sphere, Fraser reminds us that excluded groups are not passive victims of such social norms. Rather, they find means for participation through the creation of counter-publics (1990, pg. 7). There is no “single, uniform public sphere;” rather

...different groups of people come together under different conditions and with varying extent and power, sometimes in ‘counterpublics’—groups coming together to oppose the more hegemonic public sphere and ideologies. (Tufekci, 2017, pg. 37)

Accordingly, Tufekci puts forward a more comprehensive terminology - the “digitally networked public sphere” or “networked public sphere” - which accounts for this complex web of transnational and global publics found both online and offline (2017, pg. 38). This concept speaks to Fraser’s later article, which highlights that “public opinion seldom stops at the borders of territorial states” (Fraser, 2007, pg. 14). To this end, Tufekci’s concept of the networked public sphere is important to these discussions, in particular around social movements and in particular for this paper’s case study of the 16
Days of Activism campaign. It allows us to frame and understand the 16 Days as a type of public or counterpublic within an updated framing of the public sphere, acting on the basis of “collective, coordinated action” in order to right what has been defined as a social wrong (2017, pg. 40).

3.2 Development Theory

The 16 Days of Activism campaign as a public or counterpublic is also an interesting example of the point where social movements intersect with international development communications and advocacy, and in a wider sense, where public sphere theory and development theory meet. The importance of participation in the public sphere and the mainstreaming of gender issues within the framework of human rights are critical focus areas within current international development paradigms, though this has not always been the case. In this section, we will briefly review the trajectory of the dominant theories of development over time, in parallel mapping how the framing of gender-based violence within development has evolved in tandem with these theories.

According to Cheryl McEwan, understanding development is about understanding “what constitutes ‘improvement’, what ‘appropriate intervention’ means, and the power relations underpinning the will to improve [Li 2007]” (2019, pg. 121). Initial approaches to international development - first modernization theory, followed by dependency theory, and later neoliberalism - differed to a certain extent in their view of power relations and the role of “developed nations” in supporting “developing countries,” but their overall concept of improvement and appropriate interventions were grounded in Western capitalist models of economic development. These models have also been critiqued for their lack of social and cultural considerations within the development process (McEwan, 2019, pgs. 121-127). Though neoliberalism is still dominant and the other two theories still exist in different forms, the 1990s saw a major shift in thinking with the publishing of Amartya Sen’s seminal book, “Development as Freedom” (1999), which presents his theory of human development. This theory views development through a human rights lens as “the
process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy” (Sen, 1999, pg. 3). In his view the goal of development is to address issues such as “poverty as well as tyranny; poor economic opportunities as well as systematic social deprivation; neglect of public facilities as well as intolerance or overactivity of repressive states” (Sen, 1999, pg. 3) so that individuals can “lead the kind of lives they have reason to value” (pg. 10). Sen recognizes that certain aspects of economic growth, including GNP and individual incomes, are important pathways to expanding individuals’ freedom, but that it cannot rely solely on economic determinants; rather, people must also be able to access critical services (he cites health care and education, for example) and to exercise their political and civil rights in the public sphere (Sen, 1990, pg. 3). He views such actions as “constituent components of development” (pg. 5). However, one of the most impactful aspects of Sen’s theory and the most relevant to this paper is his human rights focus and the mainstreaming of women’s agency into development theory. This focus expands beyond a concern for women’s well-being, establishing women as active participants and “...agents of change” in society (Sen, 1990, pg. 189). Following the introduction of this view of development the 2000s saw the adoption of the UN Millenium Declaration, the result of a series of consultations among UN member states over the previous decade, which committed member nations to efforts to reduce extreme poverty by 2015 (United Nations, n.d.a). The influence of human development is tangible in the resulting eight Millennium Development Goals, which focused on the eradication of poverty through interventions in education, healthcare, environmental sustainability, and global partnerships. A focus on women’s empowerment was notably included in goals 3 and 5, which aimed to promote women’s equality through educational targets and through improvements in maternal health care (United Nations, n.d.b; n.d.c).

As the concept of human development was shifting the locus of international development to a more human rights and gender-focused conceptualization, the 1990s were similarly pivotal years in defining the concept of gender-based violence as it is understood today. In June 1993 the World Conference on Human Rights met in Vienna, Austria formally
recognizing violence against women as a violation of basic human rights and calling for the establishment of a Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women (UN Women, 2010). Hailed as “the first independent human rights mechanism on the elimination of violence against women,” the Special Rapporteur exists to this day and is mandated to ensure the integration of concerns about violence against women into United Nations human rights framework and mechanisms (OHCHR, n.d.). The same conference recommendations also contributed to the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (1994), a landmark document adopted by the UN General Assembly that same year which, as we recall from the literature review, was crucial in setting a standard definition of gender-based violence. The Declaration furthermore defined violence against women as it occurs within the context of the family, the general community, and acts of violence “perpetrated or condoned by the state (United Nations, 1994), wherever it occurs.” This provided the basis for defining gender-based violence as a form of systemic violence and situated the issue as a violation of human rights.

This view has been carried forward within the current development paradigm of sustainable development, which expands its focus to include economic and social development, along with environmental development, as critical pillars of development. Defined as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (United Nations Brundtland Commission, 1987, pg. 16), the concept of Sustainable Development has been articulated in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and is organized around 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Women’s agency and equal participation in the public sphere are fully integrated as a central tenet of sustainable development, tied closely to women’s rights to protection from all forms of violence and exploitation. This is articulated within SDG5, which aims to “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls,” through nine targets that, among several priorities, address gender-based violence, participation in the public sphere, and the role of technology in women’s empowerment (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, n.d.).
It is within this context that the Special Rapporteur released their thematic report in 2018 to the UN Human Rights Council on the issue of online gender-based violence against women. The report focused on extending the conceptualization of gender-based violence as a human rights violation to the specific issue of online and ICT-facilitated violence, linking its root causes to other forms of gender-based violence and proposing that it “be dealt with in the broader context of the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (OHCHR, 2018, pg. 6).” At the same time, the report highlights relevant applications of international human rights frameworks to the concept of TFGBV, including:

- UN Human Rights Council resolution 20/8, which stated that ‘the same rights that people have offline must also be protected online. The view of the Internet and digital technologies as enablers of rights and the digital space as an extension of rights held offline paved the way for discussions on how digital technologies had an impact on women’s and girls’ rights, specifically with regard to gender-based violence’ (pg. 10);

- UN Human Rights Council resolution 29/14, which “recognized that domestic violence could include acts such as cyberbullying and cyberstalking — thereby reinforcing the framing of online gender-based violence as part of the continuum of violence against women” (pg. 10).

The report also names the international human rights laws applicable to online gender-based violence against women and girls, namely, “The right to live free from gender-based violence” (pg. 11), “The right to live free from gender-based violence and the right to freedom of expression and access to information” (pg. 11), and “The right to live free from gender-based violence and the right to privacy and data protection” (pg. 13).

This framing paved the way for the work of organizations like UN Women, UNFPA, and other NGOs, who have recently expanded their work on gender-based violence to include concerns about online violence. At the same time, though the issue of gender-based violence in all its forms has been so clearly linked to the issue of women’s rights and
participation in the public sphere and is now embedded in the fabric of the current development paradigm, there remains a lack of coherence in the way development organizations communicate about the issue of technology-facilitated gender-based violence. As we’ve seen earlier in the paper TFGBV is an area of growing concern, and it is therefore important to understand how development organizations talk about and define their own priorities on this issue.

4. Case Study: #16daysofactivism

The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign, a long-standing civil society initiative (UN Women, 2021) that engages with activists and organizations across the development and humanitarian sectors in the fight against gender-based violence, will be the point of departure for analysis. Launched in 1991 by activists at the first Women’s Global Leadership Institute, the campaign was part of a collaborative effort between feminist activists across the Global North and the Global South to raise awareness and recognition of gender-based violence as a human rights issue (CWGL, 2021c). One of their first major efforts was the coordination of a global petition aimed at the UN World Conference on Human Rights - the same conference held in 1993 in Vienna mentioned in the previous chapter on development theory - which, “call[ed] upon the conference to comprehensively address women’s human rights and to recognize gender-based violence as a human rights issue” (CWGL, 2021c), an effort that was ultimately successful. Since then the campaign continues to be coordinated by the Center for Women’s Global Leadership (UN Women, 2021) running annually over a period of 16 days starting on 25 November (International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women) to 10 December (International Human Rights Day). The timing and length of the campaign symbolically links the issue of gender-based violence in all its forms as a violation of basic human rights. Furthermore, the Center aims to extend this campaign from “16 to 365”, emphasizing their goal to engage relevant actors far beyond the 16 days (CWGL, n.d.), to make the issue of
gender-based violence part of wider social discourse, and ultimately influence social change. With its role as a convener between local and international actors, this campaign is uniquely situated as a relevant site of production of development discourses around gender-based violence. Furthermore, recalling the earlier discussion on public sphere theory, the 16 Days Campaign acts as a form of public or counterpublic, attempting to right a social wrong,” (Tufekci, 2017, pg. 40) and demanding an end to gender-based violence in all its forms.

In formulating its call, the 16 Days campaign articulates yearly themes that are defined by the Center for Women’s Global Leadership. During the 2021 campaign, the period of study in question, the campaign themes focused on the issues of femicide (#LetsEndFemicide) (CWGL, 2021a) and gender-based violence in the world of work (#RatifyIL0190) (CWGL, 2021b). Accordingly, it can be argued that the campaign itself may not directly provide useful insight into discourse around TFGBV. However, it is important to note that the 16 Days campaign has seen the participation of approximately 6,000 organizations worldwide since its inception, many of whom adapt it to their own context and themes (Thompson 2016, pg. 18), using their own hashtags and/or linking their own themes to the wider 16 Days Campaign via the use of hashtags such as, #16daysofactivism, #16daysofactivism2021, etc. And it is specifically within this area of the campaign that this paper aims to focus, looking at the wider discourse generated by participants in this movement, not just the specific themes articulated by the organizers. An additional critique, as with many social media-driven hashtag campaigns coordinated by development or civil society organizations, is that such a campaign may be viewed as tokenistic with potentially limited impact on discourse or wider social change. Indeed, by their own evaluation carried out in 2016 the Center for Women’s Global Leadership noted among the trends reported a “questioning of the effectiveness of 16 Days due to challenges such as the lack of coordination, innovation, funding, or evidence of impact” (Thompson, 2016, pg. 7).

However, these limitations aside, for this paper we have considered the campaign to be a useful example from which to draw data from a variety of development actors working on
GBV, in part due to its longevity (2021 marked the campaign’s 30th anniversary [CWGL, 2021a.]) and name recognition (there is agreement that 16 Days’ has been successful in shaping the framing of the issue of GBV through a human rights lens, with their strong advocacy focus on human rights [Thompsen, 2016, pg. 36]). As a result, it maintains high-profile recognition among and engagement with agencies within the United Nations system, as well as NGOs and civil society groups, and offers a strong capacity to convene a wide range of actors internationally.

5. Methodology

Recalling that this paper places an emphasis on the importance of discourse in social change, I have employed critical discourse analysis as a methodology to examine social media content posted during the 16 Days of Activism campaign to gain insight into the extent to which technology and its impact on women’s experience of gender-based violence is taken into account in international development discourse. Accordingly, I attempt to address the following research question - How is the impact of technology on women’s experience of violence recognized within the wider development discourses around gender-based violence within the 16 Days Campaign? - through an exploration of the following sub-questions:

- Is there a shared understanding, terminology and definition of the issue of TFGBV, as well as its various forms, impacts and responses to it?
- How do we define the context within which TFGBV discourse is situated, including the genres and themes that guide it, as well as the voices present or missing from the discussion and their linkages?

For this, I have selected Norman Fairclough’s model of critical discourse analysis due to its research focus on “discursive practices in construct[ing] representations of the world, social subjects and social relations, including power relations [...]” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002,
This focus on power relations is important, but not in the exact sense described by Jørgensen & Phillips, who were referring to power relations between social groups. Rather, in this analysis it focuses both on power relations between different development actors, as well as on the power of TFGBV as a discourse within wider development discourses around gender-based violence. This is important as though TFGBV is a newly defined phenomenon and not necessarily so well understood, the available data and literature demonstrate the wide and growing prevalence of the issue, as well lack of legal protections and victim recourse. Recalling the earlier quote from Dunn who wrote that words shape our social and legal understanding of a phenomenon and have the power to change social norms (Dunn, 2021, pg. 26), we are reminded of the power of discourse and the importance of a common understanding of TFGBV. This furthermore speaks to UNFPA’s call for a shared terminology and definition (UNFPA, 2021a, pg. 9) in order to drive development response. This analysis is timely as well as issues of gender and women’s rights, including GBV, remain a major focus of international development programming and organizations have already started to explore technology’s impact on this thematic area through communications campaigns. The 16 Days Campaign, as a convener of such actors and of discourse within the field of international development around gender-based violence, provides an ideal point of departure for the analysis.

Fairclough’s model is articulated around two dimensions - the communicative event (e.g. instances of language) and the order of discourse (e.g. the sum of all instances of language and accordingly, the existing discourses and “genres” expressed within them)” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, pgs. 67-72). Furthermore, Fairclough’s model focuses on three layers of analysis - 1) the text itself, the wording used and its linguistic features, among other aspects; 2) the discursive practice, or the context in which it is produced, and the existing discourses and genres it draws from; and 3) the social practice, or the extent to which the communicative event reinforces or changes the status quo of the wider social practice (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, pgs. 81-88). The methodology of this paper is therefore

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5 Refer to the following section, Fairclough Dimension 2: Discursive practice, for information on organizational campaigns.
articulated around an analysis of the 16 Days of Activism campaign as the communicative event, with the individual social media posts acting as “multimodal texts” (meaning they may include video, image, sound, and/or text, etc.) (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, pg. 61). The analysis aims to address the first sub-research question through a textual analysis of the post captions and imagery (to the extent possible), as well as the information and messaging conveyed through images and/or video, to get a sense of how TFGBV is portrayed and understood. I then aim to address the second sub-research question through a basic network analysis of linkages between participating accounts and hashtags employed (focusing specifically on hashtags that refer to other advocacy campaigns). This is followed by an interpretive examination of the wider themes expressed within the campaign which, combined with the results of the network analysis, speaks to the overarching research question and provides insight into the “discursive practice” in which this aspect of the campaign is situated. The final stage of Fairclough’s model, the “social practice” will be the subject of discussion in the conclusion, bringing the results from the sub-questions together towards a response to the overall research question.

5.1 Data collection

The data used in the analysis is derived from Instagram and obtained via PicoDash, a paid service that provides a variety of reports derived from Instagram and Twitter content, including reports for all posts associated with a specific hashtag. As hashtags are the point around which social media campaigns meet and related content is aggregated, I determined the hashtag report to be the best option for this analysis. Accordingly, I requested a hashtag report for all public posts (up to their maximum limit of 10,000) uploaded to Instagram and tagged with #16daysofactivism during the campaign period. Given the heavy traffic associated with the #16daysofactivism hashtag, PicoDash provided a sampling of approximately 10,000 posts made between 3-11 December 2021. Given that 11 December 2021 falls outside of the official campaign period, and considering the massive database already provided, posts made on this date were removed from analysis.
Though various social media platforms were considered, I selected Instagram because 1) there was a high level engagement with the 16 Days Campaign and its related hashtags, and 2) it was the only platform from which it was possible to obtain data on content posted during a specific time period. Prior to requesting the report, much consideration went into the selection of the hashtag, as there are a number of variations of 16 Days-related hashtags (including #16days, #16daysofactivism, #16daysofactivism2021, #16daysofactivismagainstGBV, etc). Given the cost of obtaining reports ($100 USD per report of up to 10,000 posts), and the limited time and technological resources available to analyze such a wealth of data, it was necessary to focus on one hashtag. Considering that #16days is quite short and generic and therefore included a lot of potentially unrelated posts; that #16daysofactivism2021, #16daysofactivismagainstGBV, are quite long and unwieldy; and that #16daysofactivism included a higher number of posts than any of the other potential variations, I determined this hashtag to be the best data source.

5.2 Limitations

While every effort was made to obtain data and create a robust methodology allowing for a useful analysis, it was necessary to set certain boundaries. For example, as the 16 Days Campaign is a global campaign, there were a number of posts made in a variety of languages other than English. As these posts did not represent a significant portion of the data, only posts made in English were maintained in the data set in order to avoid any issues in translation. Exceptions were made in cases where a post included an English language translation of the original caption text. There were also some limitations that were unavoidable. For example, it would have been preferable to access the full dataset of content posted under #16daysofactivism for the entire 16 day period of the campaign, as well as to have had access to insights on peak posting periods. However, limitations placed by social media platforms on how much data one person can obtain made this rather complex and financially unattainable (these specific issues will be described further in the next section on ethical considerations). In addition, insofar that context and detail are often lost in social media content it could also be argued that such data is not the best way to
analyze what is a rather complex issue, the definition of which draws on a number of theories and concepts and requires a certain level of nuance. Such a fine level of detail can make a post caption long, which may not lend itself to likes and follows on social media and limits the potential reach and impact, and which may ultimately impact an analysis that aims to gauge whether TFGBV discourse within the 16 Days Campaign is influential in driving GBV discourse and ultimately, social change. At the same time, participation in such social media campaigns is part and parcel of communications and advocacy work in international development, and how development organizations communicate externally on these issues gives critical insights into how they define and address issues of social justice. Despite these limitations, there is important insight to be gained from this data. Finally, it is possible to critique the fact that #16daysofactivism is not a user-generated hashtag, rather it refers to the title of an institutionalized advocacy campaign and as we will see later in the analysis is very much a platform for discourse among development organizations, rather than a reflection of wider discourse within society. However, considering that the focus of this research is on discourse within international development, this limitation will not inherently affect the results or conclusions.

5.3 Ethical considerations and positionality

The process of collecting historical data from social media platforms raised a number of limitations, as well as some larger ethical questions that are beyond the scope of this paper to answer, but which are important to articulate nonetheless. In drafting my research proposal, I had assumed it would be possible to do a hashtag search for #16daysofactivism and use Nvivo Ncapture to capture the necessary data. I quickly learned, though, that social media platforms set limitations on the data that can be captured by Nvivo. For example, Nvivo can capture Instagram data but only in PDF format, which is difficult to analyze. This was also particularly true for Twitter, which I had initially targeted for analysis given the wealth of posts engaging with the 16 days campaign. However, with only basic research access to Twitter, I could not obtain data from more than 7 days prior, which did not suit the needs of the analysis. While Twitter has an academic research API that allows researchers
to obtain and analyze historical data, one must formally apply to request access. My request was denied on the basis that I could not provide a university webpage or access to a student directory with my name listed, and despite receiving support from Malmo University, no viable solution could be found in time. It appears this tool is only available to sponsored researchers affiliated with an institution and not an average master’s degree student doing thesis research. The only option remaining was to purchase the data or reports from a service provider. I considered using social media monitoring platforms such as Talkwalker, Meltwater, etc., which allow data analysis from multiple social media platforms in one report. However, companies were either unresponsive to customer service requests or their services were cost-prohibitive. One platform, Talkwalker, offers a free service option, but this only allows for analysis of social media data from the previous 7 days. In the end, PicoDash offered the only cost effective solution, which could provide historical data from Instagram, one of the main platforms identified.

Throughout this process, I began to question the ethics of using social media data for academic research. Sarah Jackson, et. al, include a brief discussion of this dilemma in their research on hashtag activism, which was conducted using Twitter data. They indicate that at the time of their research they had privileged access to Twitter (the specifics are not provided), which they no longer have and which would be cost-prohibitive if they were to try and replicate the same analysis today (2020, pg. 205). They also acknowledge that at the time of writing their book there were few options for social science researchers to work with social media platforms to conduct research online due to privacy concerns and protecting users personal data (2020, pg. 205). At the same time, they argue when access to such data is only available to a privileged few, this threatens online social justice research (2020, pg. 206). I tend to agree with their argument, and while I do think it is important that social media platforms place limitations on the amount of data individuals can obtain, I find it worrying that the same companies instead use access limitations as a way to profit off of the sale of individual data. I do not feel knowledgeable enough at this time to reconcile this issue, but I find it important to raise nonetheless.
In terms of ethical use of the social media data collected, York University has issued a useful set of guidance that highlights the need for a number of considerations including legal concerns, duty of care, data integrity/management, as well as user privacy and user consent (York University, n.d.). These considerations were assessed from a risk management perspective, and the detailed analysis is included in Annex I. All potential risks were judged to be low as the use of data from PicoDash is fully compliant with Instagram’s terms and conditions, and their service and use of Instagram’s API and data functions has been reviewed and approved by Instagram (Picodash, n.d.). Also, as the research does not require direct interaction with any users, and the data will be analyzed at an aggregate level, to the extent possible without referencing individual users, there is essentially no risk of causing harm. Lastly, though it is not possible to verify the identifying information posted by all users (in terms of their location, organization type, etc.), it has been possible to validate most of the accounts representing organizations through links to their websites or other resources. Therefore, the risk of this affecting the outcome of the analysis is low.

In terms of my own positionality, it is important to note that I am an international civil servant employed by UNICEF since January 2022. Prior to January, I had been employed by the United Nations Population Fund since 2010 in various roles, but most recently in providing operational support to a women’s empowerment project in West and Central Africa. One aspect of this project tackles social norms that can lead to, among other issues, various forms of gender-based violence. This project ultimately brought me into contact with many of the themes I address in this paper, and my position in UNFPA up until this year allowed me access to contacts within UNFPA, as well as external researchers working on TFGBV. Though our discussions were of a conceptual and exploratory nature and have not been used directly as reference material within this thesis, certainly those exchanges influenced this paper’s direction. At the same time, in order to remove potential bias from the analysis and to ensure no conflict of interest nor any possible breach of confidentiality, I
specifically chose the 16 Days campaign as the point of analysis given that the data is public, covers a wide range of organizations both large and small, international and local, and can be analyzed in aggregate.

6. Structure of Analysis and Findings

As this analysis focuses on the specific discourse around technology and its impact on women’s experience of violence within the 16 Days Campaign, it was necessary to refine the vast initial dataset down to specific content addressing this topic. I started by combining the four excel data sets of approximately 2,500 posts provided by PicoDash into one spreadsheet. I then uploaded this dataset into Nvivo and conducted a word frequency analysis which, given the size of the dataset, provided a report on the top 1,000 words. I reviewed this word list manually and extracted all terminology that had any relation to technology. In total I identified 10 words including blog, internet, digital, network, online, podcast, website, webinar, youtube, and zoom6. I then completed a preliminary coding process whereby data entries were coded with the relevant term(s), and extracted into a separate database for review. This reduced the data sample to about 10% of posts included in the original report (approx 1,600 posts/lines of data). From there, I reviewed the content of each post, coding the data as follows:

- The genre to which the post belongs;
- Whether the caption of the post made reference to a technology discourse, in particular a TFGBV discourse, and if so, a description of the theme employed;
- Whether the post was made by an individual or organization, as well as any information included in the account’s profile describing the individual’s job or role, or type of organization;
- The relevant geography related to the post;

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6 Note that the term “technology” appeared in so few cases, it did not appear in the initial word frequency analysis. I later ran a follow-up analysis including all words, and “technology” did appear, but in such few instances as to be almost irrelevant.
- Which organizations were mentioned ("@" ed) in the caption;
- Which hashtags were employed;
- And finally, any useful data from the accompanying image in terms of other organizations or campaigns referenced in the image that were not also referenced in the caption text.

This further reduced the dataset to approximately 1% of the original report; that is 167 posts that actually discussed in one form or another the impact of technology on women’s experiences of violence. The remaining approximately 1,500 posts did not make reference to technology in any relation to gender-based violence. Rather many posts served to advertise websites, podcasts, webinars, etc., related to the wider theme of GBV. They were removed from analysis, as they did not provide useful insight.

### 6.1 Demographics

To start I analyzed the accounts’ basic demographics to get a sense of who was participating in the campaign, their location, and their reach in terms of followers and likes. In total, 102 accounts posted on this topic in one form or another, the majority of which (64%) self-identified as various types of formalized organizations ranging from international NGOs, national NGOs, UN agencies, non-profit organizations, community organizations, women’s associations and shelters, private foundations, and labor unions, among other designations\(^7\). Individual users made up the second largest group of participants (14%), some of whom identified themselves as artists, activists, psychologists and radio or magazine personalities in their profile descriptions. These individuals were followed by a group categorized as “other” (8%) that combined a number of accounts not fitting into any clear category of formalized organizations, including a podcast, a digital peace campaign, an online community and platform, and a capacity building program. The remaining participants were categorized as various university-associated groups (4%), private companies (3%), and government-related offices (1%).

\(^7\) Note that all designations applied to the different user groups identified are based on information provided by the user in their public Instagram profile, and were verified to the extent possible by accessing web pages and other resources linked in their Instagram profile.
In terms of overall engagement among those 102 accounts, nearly 50% of users made only one post contributing to TFGBV and technology-focused GBV discourse during the seven-day period studied and only the top five users made five posts or more. Given the length of the campaign and that organizations approach GBV work from many different angles, it is to be expected that not every organization will post TFGBV-related content each day. However, overall there appears to have been limited repeat advocacy on this topic. The top two users sharing the highest number of individual posts were @thehumanitarianfoundation.tt (The Humanitarian Foundation for Positive Social Change) and @mmfdpak (Media Matters for Democracy), with 14 and 11 posts respectively, averaging around 1.5-2 posts per day during the seven day period covered in the data set. The Humanitarian Foundation describes themselves as a “team of professionals in the field of law and social work working for change” with a geographical focus on Trinidad and Tobago. Aside from being the most active in TFGBV discourse, The Humanitarian Foundation also has the largest number of followers (24,211 followers) out of participating accounts and the second highest aggregate like count for posts (373 likes). Though high in comparison to other accounts this number is still relatively low, considering that 373 is an aggregate value of all likes for all posts in the dataset (representing an average of 27 likes per post; it is also unclear how many likes come from users following their account). The user account with the second highest number of posts, @mmfdpak or Media Matters for Democracy, is a non-profit organization with a geographical focus on Pakistan, and similar to The Humanitarian Foundation, they have the second highest number of followers (17,424 followers). In terms of post engagement via likes they have the fourth highest aggregate like count (272), however on average this comes out to about almost the same level of engagement as The Humanitarian foundation (with an average of 24 likes per post). I interpret these figures to mean that while there are organizations with relatively large

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8 See the organization’s account at [https://www.instagram.com/thehumanitarianfoundation.tt/](https://www.instagram.com/thehumanitarianfoundation.tt/).
9 All numbers reflecting followers and likes were recorded at the time of analysis, and may have changed since.
10 Though the analysis of engagement might have been enriched by including an analysis of comments, the dataset only included the comment count and it was not technically possible to retrieve the content of the comments in a format conducive to analysis. Accordingly, this part of the analysis focused on followers and likes, as this was the best data available.
reach addressing the issue of TFGBV directly in their content, their potential impact is limited considering the low level of engagement with their posts.

Finally considering geography, while in the case of 32% of posts it was not possible to ascertain the geographical focus of the organization or individual behind the account, 13% of the overall engagement with this topic comes from accounts representing organizations working in Pakistan, Nigeria, Trinidad and Tobago (8% each), and Nepal (7%). There was also some limited representation from South Africa, Tanzania, India, Malaysia, Kenya, and Rwanda, etc. (the full list is included in Annex II). It is interesting to note that the voices speaking out on the issue of TFGBV are largely representative of the Global South (24 geographies in total), with less than half of the geographies representing the Global North (11 - including USA, Canada, Australia, UK, Denmark, etc.). This is an important point that will be explored further via Fairclough’s second stage of discursive analysis, considering the linkages and networks between participating organizations.

6.2 Fairclough’s dimension 1: The text itself

However, first it is necessary to undertake a textual analysis. Recalling Fairclough’s model where the first level of analysis lies within the text itself (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, pg. 83), this first stage attempts to address SRQ1, “Is there a shared understanding, terminology and definition of the issue of TFGBV, as well as its various forms, impacts and responses to it?” by considering the following textual aspects:

- The descriptive umbrella terms used to name and define technology-facilitated abusive acts;
- The descriptive terms used to name and describe the various forms of technology-facilitated violence;

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11Note that I’ve used the term geography to indicate the geographical focus of the content posted, but this may not necessarily be the same place where the user account and its associated organization or individual is located.

12It is important to describe briefly how I made the distinction between what was considered to be a descriptive umbrella term for defining this phenomenon and what was considered a “form” of TFGBV, as appears in the above list. The difference is not always so clear cut, but where a post briefly introduced or made a statement about this issue, or where a post used a term to introduce the issue and then listed additional terms to describe specific forms of TFGBV, this was
- The causes and effects discussed;
- The potential responses to such violence that were discussed.

Considering descriptive umbrella terms, the analysis found that the terms most often used to name technology-facilitated abusive acts as a phenomenon were: 1) **online harassment**, followed by 2) **online violence**, 3) **online abuse**, 4) **online gender-based violence**, and 5) **online sexual abuse**. What is interesting is that all of these terms reflect an understanding of such harassment, violence, abuse, etc., as being carried out in online spaces. Only one term (**online gender-based violence**) includes a reflection on the gendered nature of such violence, and none of these five descriptors account for the fact that it can also be committed via digital tools. The term **technology-facilitated gender-based violence**, which is the term employed throughout this paper and used in some of the most recent research and gray literature (as well as its sister term **ICT-facilitated violence**) is mentioned, but only in two instances. Furthermore, there is one instance where the term **social media and technology abuse** appears, and is described as interchangeable with **digital abuse**, but none of these terms appear to have gained traction beyond a few individual posts.

In terms of the forms of TFGBV described throughout the data, the most commonly referred to are: 1) **image-based abuse**, 2) **digital hate** (referring to hate speech in digital spaces), 3) **stalking**, 4) **cyberbullying**, and 5) **doxxing** (refer back to the Literature Review, sub-section “TFGBV - definitions, prevalence and forms” for definitions of these terms). This is followed by a long list of additional forms of technology-facilitated gender-based violence including:

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<th>Forms</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Image-based abuse</td>
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<td>Digital hate</td>
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</table>

considered to be a “descriptor” or umbrella term. On the other hand, the “forms” described represent the different expressions of TFGBV that have been defined in relation to a descriptive umbrella term.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stalking</td>
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<td>Cyberbullying</td>
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<td>Doxxing</td>
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<td>Online sexual exploitation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Blackmailing</td>
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<td>Online child exploitation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pornography</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non consensual texting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trolling</td>
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<td>Misinformation</td>
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<td>Online impersonation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Catfishing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cybercrime</td>
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<td>Harmful content</td>
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<tr>
<td>Online extortion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Online rape threats</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cyberflashing</td>
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<td>Hacking</td>
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<td>Threats</td>
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<td>Cybergrooming</td>
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<td>Death threats</td>
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<tr>
<td>Defamation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Financial fraud</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intimate partner violence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sexual solicitation online</td>
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</table>

*Table 1. List of descriptive terms used to describe the various forms of TFGBV (in order from most to least frequently referenced).*

While the list is quite long, and each term carries its own specific nuance, they are not necessarily used in isolation and in many cases are linked throughout post content - for example, “non-consensual texting,” “trolling,” “hacking,” and/or “doxxing,” etc., may make reference to “stalking” tactics, while “pornography” (more specifically revenge pornography) may be used in discussing forms of “blackmail” or “online extortion.” All these forms of TFGBV can be considered to be forms of “intimate partner violence” in such
circumstances where they occur between intimate partners, and “digital hate” can be committed via “defamation,” “trolling,” “misinformation,” “threats,” “death threats,” “online rape threats,” etc. Furthermore, “online child exploitation” may be considered to be a form of “online sexual exploitation” and can be directly linked to “cybergrooming.” What all these terms have in common, though, is they describe the myriad of forms of emotional and psychological violence that hinder women’s participation in the public sphere. They also create a baseline list of the social wrongs that the organizations and individuals forming the 16 Days counterpublic seek to right.

Moving on to descriptions of causes and effects, there was comparatively less discussion around this aspect. Only two key terms came clearly through in the analysis: COVID and gender equality. COVID was the most cited term; we have seen this reference earlier in the literature, which referenced UN Women’s report highlighting the exponential increase in online gender-based violence due to the rapid increase in internet usage during the COVID-19 pandemic (UN Women, 2020, pg. 2). References to COVID within the campaign recall this concern as well. Interestingly, most COVID references link directly to UN Women either by citing the organization as a hashtag or by mention and/or by referring to UN Women’s concurrent campaign on gender-based violence, Orange the World (these links will be explored further in a later section.) It is also of note that the main root cause of TFGBV as identified across the literature reviewed in this paper - that is structural gender inequality - was mentioned in only one instance. This is a glaring gap in communications considering the extent to which gender-based violence is now linked to issues of structural gender equality and, accordingly, tied to human rights frameworks within the current development paradigm.

Regarding effects, here as well only two themes came clearly through the analysis. On this point, though, the analysis focused less on the specific words employed, and more on the concept or theme being described. The most referenced discussion was mental health impacts, referring to the trauma that survivors experience as a result of TFGBV, which may
lead to, “low self esteem, isolation, withdrawal, depression, anxiety, suicide and even causes deterioration of personal family relationships.” I also identified a discussion around the silencing and limited expression of women who may withdraw or censor themselves in online spaces for fear of harassment or abuse, or as a result of trauma already experienced. It is important to note that these discussions around “mental health impacts” and “limited expression” are inextricably linked; they indicate that when a woman experiences isolation or withdrawal from her networks, in particular her online or digital networks, she may self-limit her own ability to communicate and express herself through such critical mediums. These effects also speak to the earlier discussions on the false dichotomy of online and offline, as they address the very real, physical effects and the coercive effects such forms of violence have, limiting women’s participation in the public sphere.

Finally, the analysis looked at proposed responses to deal with the impacts of TFGBV. This point also took a more interpretative approach using the text to define relevant concepts or themes. Accordingly, the data shows a strong focus on digital tools to fight GBV, discussing the ways that digital tools can be created and deployed to fight against and protect women from technology-facilitated gender-based violence. This encompasses such examples as discussions around digital safe spaces, the use of digital literacy for women’s empowerment, as well as digital apps that can be used for informational and monitoring purposes. There was also a secondary concentration on legal responses - in particular, the lack thereof - which included a discussion of whether forms of TFGBV can be considered lawful or unlawful. This may be linked to some extent to the issue’s framing as a violation of human rights and what Sen described as the “legitimacy critique” of human rights; that is, “…the worry that human rights confound consequences of legal systems, which give people certain well-defined rights, with pre-legal principles that cannot really give one a justiciable right” (Sen, 1990, pg. 227). This is essentially the same tension described by Dunn, who notes the struggles that legal systems currently face in trying to understand and

13 See https://www.instagram.com/p/CXM07S2r11H/.
regulate abusive technology-facilitated acts (Dunn, 2021, pg. 2), and who find it difficult to draw concrete lines between what is a legal and illegal act.

Linked to legal responses, the topics of incident reporting and victim support also appeared, albeit in only a few instances, and focused on discussions around bystander training, for example, and how women can support each other in online spaces to stop violence in real time. However, placing the burden of support on women to protect other women serves to highlight the lack of recourse available through current legal systems and tech platforms. The Feminist Principles of the Internet - a set of 17 principles issued as statements offering “a gender and sexual rights lens on critical internet-related rights,” (Feminist Internet, n.d.) - which are built from the same human rights perspective and speak to many of the issues discussed in the literature review and theory (including access and participation, open expression, women’s agency, etc.) were also brought into the discussion in two posts, looking at how this concept could be used to empower and ensure the safety of women online, within the Kenyan context specifically\(^\text{14}\). Finally, there was minor mention of tech industry responses. While there have been strong public calls for the tech industry to take concrete steps to protect women from abuse on their platforms (Suzor et. al., 2019; WWWF, 2021a), only one post clearly expressed this stance.\(^\text{15}\) Rather, the only other post discussing tech industry responses appeared to promote StopNCII.org, a new initiative and tool by Meta to stop the sharing of non-consensual images, which is perhaps a reflection of the commitments made by tech industry letters in response to such calls (WWWF, 2021b).\(^\text{16}\)

6.2.1 Summary of findings - SRQ1

In response to the sub-question, Is there a shared understanding, terminology and definition of the issue of TFGBV, as well as its various forms, impacts and responses to it? - I would

\(^{14}\) While there is not sufficient space to explore the Principles further here, the Feminist Principles of the Internet offer an interesting approach to a more practical interpretation of the human rights-based framing of the issue. For more information, see https://feministinternet.org/en/principles.

\(^{15}\) See https://www.instagram.com/p/CXLpET7skDs/.

\(^{16}\) See https://www.instagram.com/p/CXNwWFtMVG3/. 
argue that the findings indicate both yes and no. When considering causes, effects and responses in relation to TFGBV, there did appear to be a common understanding in defining these aspects that were coherent with the available literature (though this may not be indicative of wider understandings, considering the low overall engagement on these aspects). However, when considering umbrella terms used to describe this phenomenon, I would argue that the variety of terms employed may signal a lack of coherence among participating development actors in naming this phenomenon. This is particularly important, as we saw that there exists an entirely separate set of terminology employed to describe the various forms of technology-facilitated gender-based violence and that making a distinction between umbrella terms and “forms” is not actually that straightforward. In many cases, organizations may use terms interchangeably between these two categories. For example, the literature review revealed that researchers such as Suzie Dunn (2021), and organizations like UNFPA (2021a) and the Economist (2021) define “harassment,” “online harassment” and “cyber-harassment” as forms of TFGBV, whereas the Pew Institute survey refers to “online harassment” in the title of its report and throughout the survey breaks down people’s experiences of online harassment by describing its different forms (Vogel, 2021). I, too, struggled with this classification throughout the analysis, and these opposing differences in the framing detract from establishing a clear understanding and common definition. It appears that different players bring varied interpretations to the table, and there is a continued need to establish a common set of terminology within international development discourse.

6.3 Fairclough Dimension 2: Discursive practice

Building on this understanding of the textual elements, I sought to address SRQ2, which asks, How do we define the context within which TFGBV discourse is situated, including the genres and themes that guide it, as well as the voices present or missing from the discussion and their linkages? This question and its analysis are derived from Fairclough’s second stage of discursive analysis, which considers the context in which the text is produced, including the existing genres and discourses it draws from (Jørgensen & Phillips,
To this point, I considered first the aspect of genres, of which two were identified - an **advocacy** and an **advertising** genre. Within the context of 16 Days, “advertisement” is less about the promotion of goods or services for commercial gain and more about organizations publicizing their work, linking to external resources beyond Instagram, including websites, webinars, podcasts, etc., as well as sharing information about available services and/or tools, and promoting meetings, workshops or other events that are planned or have taken place. This differs from the “advocacy” genre, which includes posts with content that is solely focused on raising awareness and advocating around a specific topic. Out of 166 posts analyzed, 55% fell into the advocacy genre, while 43% fell within the advertising genre. A small percentage (2%) were more difficult to categorize, as they shared aspects of promotion and advocacy, and so were considered to be part of both genres.

I then reviewed the initial results of the analysis of the textual data to determine which related themes intersect and contribute to our understanding of the phenomenon of TFGBV. Interestingly, much of the content recalls the literature review and theoretical framework section of this paper. For example, this thematic analysis recalls the concept of the **continuum of violence**, which I have used in this paper to situate TFGBV as a form of emotional or psychological violence (Dunn, 2021, pg. 29). Additionally, certain aspects of the content analyzed also define TFGBV as an issue of **social norms**, a reflection of inequalities that exist in the offline world that are a result of long-standing norms (see O’Donnell & Sweetman, 2018; Tufekci, 2017; Dunn, 2020; Coombs, 2021). This ties into discussions that recall TFGBV’s links to **human rights** and **intersectionality**, accounting for the fact that all forms of gender-based violence are a violation of a woman’s basic rights and that intersectional identities (in terms of age, race, sexuality, etc.) make a woman increasingly vulnerable to such abuse (WWWF, 2021a). Accordingly, it is also linked to wider discussions about women’s participation in the **digital public sphere** and women’s **digital inclusion**, which speaks to women's basic human rights for equal inclusion in
society (OHCHR, 2018), and highlights parallel themes of **online safety** and **digital security** in terms of protecting women in online spaces.

Considering the final aspect of the context in which the discourse of TFGBV is situated, I analyzed the campaign’s organizational context, looking at accounts mentioned (or “@’ed”) and hashtags employed, as well as the linkages between those participants. This is an important aspect for analysis as many organizations conduct advocacy work around GBV, some on TFGBV in particular, and their presence via linkages and hashtags is important to understanding linkages to other related discourses within the 16 Days Campaign. Looking first at mentions in the caption or image of a post (for the detailed list, please refer to Annex III), they appear to be mainly the accounts of different non-profit and international development organizations. Among the accounts with the most mentions are UN Women and UNFPA, coincidentally organizations that have recently run major campaigns or conducted advocacy work on the topic of TFGBV in parallel with the 16 Days. For example, UNFPA launched their “#Bodyright” campaign during the 16 Days, a multimedia campaign focused specifically on the topic of technology-facilitated gender-based violence and articulated around the theme of women’s bodily autonomy in online spaces (UNFPA, 2021b). UN Women furthermore tied their “UNiTE by 2030 to End Violence against Women campaign” to the 16 Days Campaign, using the theme “#Orange the World” (UN Women, n.d.c); this makes reference to the 25th day of each month which they have designated as “Orange Day,” a day for advocacy in the fight against gender-based violence [UN Women, n.d.d]). Their participation included specific messaging around online harassment that was shared by other accounts throughout the 16 Days. UN Women and UNFPA’s prevalence in terms of mentions is also of note when considering how these mentions create linkages between different participants. This is visualized in the below social network analysis map:
In this map all nodes represent Instagram users, and the arrows show the direction in which the accounts are linked (meaning arrows originate from the account who has made a post with a mention, and point towards the mentioned user). At first glance, the lack of interconnectivity between the participating accounts is rather striking. The mentions flow only in one direction, and there are a number of organizations on the periphery that are connecting only to other accounts from the same organization (for example, @oxfaminternational mentioning their Indonesian branch @oxfamindonesia), or else to related organizations within their same geographical focus (for example @edunova_sa mentioning @trevornoahfoundation, both organizations based out of and focusing on South Africa, or @sb_foundationng mentioning fellow Nigerian organizations, @nigeria_reads).

This can be interpreted as a reflection of the prevalence of the advertising genre noted previously and the use of the 16 Days Campaign as a platform for organizations’ self-promotion. At the same time, recalling the earlier discussion around campaign demographics, we can see a number of smaller organizations from the Global South (for example, @circlewomen in Pakistan, @dici.ngo and @chfinitiative in Nigeria, etc).
reflected towards the center of the map using mentions to create links with larger global institutions, such as @unfpa, @unwomen, etc.

The same can also be seen in analyzing campaign hashtags employed. The below table details these hashtags ranked in order by how often they were used, as well as the organization leading the campaign, and its geographical focus:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Led by</th>
<th>Geography</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#orangetheworld</td>
<td>UN Women</td>
<td>Global</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#generationequality</td>
<td>UN Women</td>
<td>Global</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#passthegeob</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#KinderInternet</td>
<td>Media Matters for Democracy</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#passthegeobnigeria</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#spotlightinitiative</td>
<td>European Union</td>
<td>Global</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#bodyright</td>
<td>UNFPA</td>
<td>Global</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#FreeToBeOnline</td>
<td>Plan International</td>
<td>Global</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#BeSafeOnline</td>
<td>Plan International</td>
<td>Global</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#IAmGenerationEquality</td>
<td>UN Women</td>
<td>Global</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 2. List of intersecting hashtag campaigns*

The top two campaign hashtags employed are #OrangeTheWorld and #GenerationEquality, both of which are UN Women-led campaigns. While the origin of #OrangeTheWorld was described in the previous section, #GenerationEquality focuses on “realizing women’s rights for an equal future” and demands “an end to sexual harassment and all forms of violence against women and girls” (UN Women, n.d.e), among calls for other forms equality. Like #OrangeTheWorld, #GenerationEquality is not a campaign.

17 It is of note that a major part of the Generation Equality campaign involved the organization the Generation Equality Forum in 2021. (See [https://forum.generationequality.org/home](https://forum.generationequality.org/home)) Convened by UN Women, with the Mexican and French governments as co-chairs, this was a major international event bringing together international development organizations, governments, the private sector, civil society and youth. During the forum, a group of 200+ influential women across different sectors addressed an open letter to the CEOs of Twitter, Facebook, Tiktok and Google, calling on their action to respond to the widespread issue of online harassment and violence (WWWF, 2021a). They wrote, “Your decisions shape the way billions of people experience life online. With your incredible financial resources and engineering might, you have the unique capability and responsibility to ensure your platforms prevent, rather than fuel, this abuse (WWWF, 2021a).” In addition, a Tech Policy Design Lab was held in the run up to the Forum for the purposes of designing prototypes for social media platforms to deal with the issue of online abuse.
specifically focused on TFGBV; rather #OrangeTheWorld creates a link between TFGBV and a wider discourse on gender-based violence, and #GenerationEquality, with a wider discourse on gender equality. At the same time the organizations employing these hashtags create a link with UN Women as an organization as well.

This is visualized further in the below hashtag network analysis map, which shows the interlinkages between campaign hashtags implemented by other organizations and the users employing them in their posts:

Image 2 - Hashtag frequency analysis (created with Polinode)

The white nodes represent Instagram user accounts, which are linked by yellow arrows to pink nodes, representing intersecting campaign hashtags. The size of each pink node is relative to the amount of times the hashtag is employed (meaning the more it has been referred to across the dataset, the larger the node). What is interesting to note in this map, is the density of organizations, many of which are smaller groups located in the Global South, employing the hashtags #OrangeTheWorld as well as #GenerationEquality (and its various iterations), linking their discourse to that of UN Women. This is not, however, the case for
the other campaign hashtags reviewed. The next most-used hashtags, #passthegeob and
#KinderInternet, refer respectively to a campaign in support of the Gender and Equitable
Opportunities Bill (GEOB) in Nigeria\textsuperscript{18} and to a separate campaign against digital hate in
Pakistan\textsuperscript{19}. Though they may rank higher than other hashtags for their prevalence, they are
only referenced by one account (or organization) on multiple occasions. The same goes for
#bodyright (UNFPA’s TFGBV campaign) where half of the accounts employing the hashtag
are UNFPA offices. This also applies to #FreeToBeOnline and #BeSafeOnline, campaigns
led by Plan International, which are mainly used by Plan’s own offices and which refer to
their 2020 Annual Report “Free to Be Online? Girls’ and young women’s experiences of
online harassment” (Plan International, n.d.b).

Though there may be less attempts by smaller organizations to link to the larger global
institutions via their hashtag campaigns, the linkages that do exist coupled with the data
discussed earlier on mentions may be interpreted as an attempt to reach a wider audience
(for example, by encouraging larger organizations to reshare their content), to connect with
more followers, and/or bring further attention or funding opportunities to their work.
However, these same global organizations are conspicuously missing from the discourse.
They appear in this aspect of the campaign discourse mainly via mentions from other
organizations or through the use of their campaign hashtags, but there appears to be little to
no interaction between them and the accounts mentioning them. In the instance that they do
interact with the campaign, there is a tendency for these institutions to refer to their own
campaigns and work.

6.3.1 Summary of findings - RQ2

In response to RQ2 - \textit{How do we define the context within which TFGBV discourse is
situated, in terms of the genres and themes that guide it, as well as the voices present or
missing from the discussion and their linkages?} - The analysis uncovered the prevalence of
an “advocacy” and “advertising” genre. Given that the 16 Days Campaign is at its heart an

\textsuperscript{18} See https://www.instagram.com/p/Ca4_qTyrDDz/.
\textsuperscript{19} See https://www.instagram.com/mmfd_pak/.
advocacy campaign, the higher prevalence of the “advocacy” genre is to be expected. At the same time, there is a strong promotional slant to much of the content posted, and I argue that this is likely a function of the platform on which content is posted. Indeed, Instagram has evolved since its inception as a photo sharing and social networking app into a highly commercialized social media platform, which may influence the strong promotional element that exists within the discourse. The same analysis carried out on campaign content from a different platform may have yielded different results. Furthermore, the analysis brought out a number of intersecting themes that situate TFGBV in much the same way the literature, theory and current development paradigm does - as a form of violence resulting from the same social norms that reinforce gender inequality in the offline world, one that more greatly affects women and those with intersectional identities; as a violation of women’s basic human rights to equal participation in the public sphere, whether online and offline; and as a violation of women’s basic right to protection from all forms of violence. In addition, I observed smaller, national-level institutions using the 16 Days as a platform to link their organizational discourse to that of larger global development institutions, whether through mentioning those organizations or using their campaign hashtags. At the same time, this linkage is unidirectional, flowing from Global South to Global North. It appears that the larger institutions instead rely on the 16 Days brand to ground and frame their own advocacy work on TFGBV by connecting their campaigns to, but not actively participating in the 16 Days campaign. These same organizations neither appear to engage with smaller organizations mentioning them and linking to their discourse.

7. Conclusion

7.1 Fairclough’s Dimension 3: Social practice

The analysis of these two sub-questions ultimately contribute to responding to the overarching question at the heart of this paper - How is the impact of technology on women’s experience of violence recognized in wider development discourses around
gender-based violence within the 16 Days Campaign? This question is structured around Fairclough’s third level of analysis, which considers the extent to which the communicative event reinforces or changes the status quo of the wider social practice (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, pg. 87). Essentially this question focuses on the power of TFGBV as a discourse within the wider development discourse of GBV and its capacity to impact social change.

To answer this question, the analysis found that within the advocacy work carried out in the 16 Days Campaign there exists a recognition of TFGBV as a discourse that is coherent with the current literature and theoretical concepts that seek to define it, as well as the current development paradigm that seeks to address it. However, there are relatively few references to this issue - just 1% of all the posts analyzed - and despite the larger reach of some of the participants speaking out on TFGBV, there is a lack of meaningful engagement and impact. This may be affected by the prevalence of the promotional element to the content, which serves to raise awareness and advertise resources, but does not necessarily inspire engagement or interaction. The analysis also highlighted efforts by smaller organizations in the Global South to connect their advocacy work to the discourses and campaigns expressed by larger global institutions in the Global North. However, this linkage flows in only one direction, reflecting a lack of interconnectivity between actors. In Fairclough’s terms, this demonstrates a lack of “interdiscursivity” (connection between related existing discourses) as well as a lack of “intertextuality” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, pg. 73) (i.e. connection between communicative events, for example between related campaigns like #16Days, #OrangeTheWorld, #Bodyright, #FreeToBeOnline, etc.). In Fairclough’s view such a low level of interdiscursivity signals “a reproduction of the established order,” and accordingly, a low potential for impacting social change (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, pg. 83). This lack of intersection at such critical junctures may also result in a fragmentation of discourse, reducing the already limited power of TFGBV as a discourse, and leading to the development of an “issue public” (Schäfer, 2015, pg. 6). Such a public forms around a specific issue (like TFGBV), but remains unconnected to other publics that deal with
intersecting topics (such as gender-based violence, or gender equality). Accordingly, the analysis appears to show that discourse around TFGBV is not necessarily shaping the wider discourse within the 16 Days campaign. If we take 16 Days to be representative of wider development discourse, it follows that TFGBV remains a minority discourse overall with limited power to impact the priority of development interventions and, in a larger sense, wider social change.

7.2 Way forward

Going forward, an important takeaway from the analysis, despite the lack of power of TFGBV as a discourse, is the level of reflection of voices from the Global South. Recalling the literature, which highlighted the lack of available data on this issue within countries in the Global South (see Dunn, 2020; Bailey et al., 2021; Makinde et al., 2021), it is important to note that such a campaign can provide useful insight into the voices and experiences of women and advocates from these regions, as well as what organizations working in these geographies see as a priority in terms of TFGBV. This is indeed a strength of the 16 Days Campaign and the discourse expressed within it. At the same time, looking at the voices missing from the campaign, it would be interesting to explore the reasons why larger global development organizations appear to be disengaged from the 16 Days, when it is has long been linked to the fight against gender-based violence and has been instrumental in helping to define the way the issue is framed to this day. It would also be interesting to explore the ways in which the 16 Days as a counter-public could enhance engagement between large development players in the Global North to the active voices in the Global South, to raise their voices up even further within the campaign. Lastly, though this paper specifically focused on discourse within the field of international development, it would be useful to further explore wider societal discourse around TFGBV. We can see discussions around the impact of technology on women’s experience of violence popping up in popular culture - for example, the recent Netflix true crime documentary “The Tinder Swindler,” which portrays the stories of the victim-survivors of convicted conman Shimon Hayut. His moniker comes from the fact that he used Tinder, a popular dating app, to meet women and
from there skillfully employed some of the very tactics mentioned earlier in this paper -
online impersonation, threats, stalking, etc. - via WhatsApp and other technological means
to coerce women into establishing loans in their own names on his behalf and defrauding
them of significant sums of money (Morris, 2022). Their stories demonstrate the ways in
which our lives and personal relationships weave in and out of online and offline spaces,
highlighting the impacts of such psychological and emotional violence on women’s
everyday lives. Such examples from wider societal discourse would be interesting to
explore and study further, and could provide an even richer insight into TFGBV discourse
and its impact on social change.

(14,297 words)
Bibliography


Annex I: Risk assessment for social media data

Annex I details the risk assessment carried out in line with York University guidelines for assessing risks related to the use of social media data in academic research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consideration</th>
<th>Risk</th>
<th>Assessment and mitigation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legal issues</td>
<td>Use of data in research may constitute a violation of the platform’s terms and conditions</td>
<td><strong>Low risk</strong> - PicoDash is fully reliant on Instagram’s terms and conditions, and their service and use of Instagram’s API and data functions has been reviewed and approved by Instagram.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duty of care, “do no harm”</td>
<td>Use of data in research may cause harm to participants</td>
<td><strong>Low risk</strong> - As the research does not interact directly with any participants and the results of the research are aggregated, there is no risk of causing harm to individuals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data integrity and management</td>
<td>Data collected may not be reliable due to users falsifying information, or may not include sufficient diversity in the sample</td>
<td><strong>Low risk</strong> - It is not possible to verify the identifying information posted by organizations (in terms of their location, organization type, etc.) or to validate the diversity of the sample, but the risk of this affecting the outcome of the analysis is low, as the analysis does not hinge on identifying data, but rather the messaging.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>User privacy and user consent</td>
<td>Use of data may violate user’s privacy, and users may not have given consent for the use of their data.</td>
<td><strong>Low risk</strong> - Given that the data has been obtained via PicoDash, which is acting in respect of Instagram’s terms and conditions, and that the data will be used at an aggregate level, there is low risk of any</td>
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</table>
Annex II: Geographical representation data

Annex II shows the details of the analysis of geographical representation of accounts participating in the 16 Days Campaign (per the available data set).

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<th>Count of Accounts</th>
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## Annex III: Data on mentions

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